

Michigan United Conservation Clubs

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House Committee on Tourism, Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation
Tuesday, January 26, 2010

MUCC testimony on Senate Bill 578 (S-6)

Dear Committee Members,

When Senate Bill 578 and House Bill 4610 were introduced, MUCC and other sporting groups opposed the bills in order to (1) ensure Michigan public lands were managed on a case-by-case basis and not through specific exceptions for user groups and (2) ensure Michigan would not be placed in diversion of much-needed federal conservation funding.

With negotiations to resolve these issues in the Senate with the (S-6) version of Senate Bill 578, these concerns appear to be resolved.

With respect to Sec. 72116, however, MUCC still questions the necessity to create a separate Equine Advisory Council (ETAC), appointed by the Governor with advice and consent of the Senate. Most DNR advisory committees are appointed through the Department. MUCC does support the concept of ETAC providing input to the newly consolidated Michigan Snowmobile and (STAC) on equine trail matters. We especially support the creation of a statewide trails network recommendation to the Department. However, we would recommend making ETAC an *advisory subcommittee* under STAC without financial support for reimbursement and expenses. Current advisory councils are funded from respective restricted funds, which those users "pay into" (e.g., the old Snowmobile Advisory Council). There is no justification for restricted fund support for ETAC, absent a "user-pay" system for equestrian users.

As a whole, we believe the current version of SB 578 (S-6) is a product of reasoned discussions about how to improve outdoor recreational access while ensuring that our state is not creating special rule exceptions for certain user groups. Further, we believe that the current version of this bill is a better approach to maintain the current practice of science-based public land management so that Michigan will not be placed in jeopardy of losing valuable federal conservation funding.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,

David Nyberg

Legislative Affairs Manager